

Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03

INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 SP-02

CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 STR-04 /056 W

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R 190712Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8778

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ASEAN, ETRD, AS

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN-ASEAN ECONOMIC CONSULATIONS

REF: STATE 204078

1. WE ARE AWARE OF ONE LENGTHY PRESS REPORT ON THIS SUBJECT ORIGINATING FROM MICHAEL RICHARDSON IN SINGAPORE. THIS ACCOUNT WAS PUBLISHED JULY 27 IN AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW AND LARGELY IDENTICAL STORY APPEARED IN AUGUST 13 EDITION OF FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW.

2. AS WE UNDERSTAND THE FACTS OF THIS MATTER, THE SUGGESTIONS IN THESE ARTICLES (1) THAT THIS WAS IN INITIATIVE OF THE FRASER GOVERNMENT AND (2) THAT THE GOA HAS RECENTLY RECEIVED A REPLY FROM ASEAN ARE BOTH INCORRECT. THE QUESTION OF PRECISELY WHAT MAY BE THE STATUS OF THE DOCUMENT FROM WHICH THE PRESS REPORTS QUOTE IS ONE FOR SPECULATION, BUT THE PROBABILITY IS THAT IT IS AN INTERNAL ASEAN MEMORANDUM.

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3. OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE FACTS IS AS FOLLOWS: IN APRIL OF

1974 A MEETING OF THE ASEAN SECRETARIES GENERAL WAS HELD IN CANBERRA. AT THAT TIME THERE WERE WIDE-RANGING DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN ASEAN AND GOA OFFICIALS OVER A VARIETY OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROJECTS WHICH AUSTRALIA WAS UNDERTAKING IN THE ASEAN COUNTRIES. WE ARE TOLD THAT IN THE COURSE OF THE 1974 MEETING THE ASEAN SIDE PROPOSED CONSIDERATION OF SOME TYPE OF ASEAN-AUSTRALIAN TRADE CONSULTATION DEVICE. ASEAN PROPOSAL WAS REVIEWED IN SUBSEQUENT MONTHS WITHIN THE GOA AND IN JUNE OF 1975 THE GOA TRANSMITTED TO THE ASEAN SECRETARIAT AN OUT-LINE, PREPARED IN THE GOA DEPARTMENT OF OVERSEAS TRADE, OF A DRAFT MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WHICH MIGHT BE ENTERED INTO TO ESTABLISH A JOINT TRADE COMMITTEE. THE AUSTRALIAN MEMORANDUM VISUALIZED A CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WHICH WOULD FACILITATE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION, MARKET ASSESSMENTS, AND INFORMAL CONSIDERATION OF EMERGIN TRADE PROBLEMS. TO DATE, THE GOA HAS RECEIVED NO RESPONSE OF ANY KIND FROM ASEAN TO THIS MEMORANDUM.

4. AS FAR AS WE CAN DETERMINE, THE GOA APPROACH TO THIS MATTER IS VERY LOW-KSQND IT HAS NOT BEEN ACTIVELY PURSUING THE PROPOSAL.

5. IN PASSING, DURING OUR INQUIRY ON THIS MATTER, DFA ALSO ADVISED US IN CONFIDENCE THAT ASEAN IS UNDERSTOOD RECENTLY TO HAVE DISCUSSED ASSIGNING SPECIAL LIAISON RESPONSIBILITY ON TRADE MATTERS WITH SPECIFIED ASEAN TRADING PARTNERS TO INDIVIDUAL MEMBER GOVTS. ACCORDING TO THIS REPORT, THAILAND IS TO BE GIVEN SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO MAINTAIN CONTACT ON TRADE MATTERS WITH THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ON BEHALF OF ASEAN. THIS REPORT HAS OCCASIONSED SOME SURPRISE AUSTRALIA'S TRADE WITH THAILAND IS RELATIVELY SMALLER THAT AUSTRALIA'S TRADE WITH OTHER ASEAN NATIONS.
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